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The Legend of Wishimino.

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Frank I. Pearce
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PREFACE.

The Legend of Mish-i-mi-nong is founded on fact. In Fox Lake, Lake County, Illinois is located Crab Apple Island, or in the Indian tongue Mish-i-mi-nong so called from its native growth of Apple trees. In the summer of 1888 while transplanting a tree we found the grave of the Indian with his "knives and charcoal" and took the knives "to the Cottage we had builded by the water". This so impressed the writer that the first part of the Legend including the appearance of the Indian was written.

Some time after, a seedling Apple tree planted by "South-wind" produced an Apple of an unknown variety with "a sweetness never known before to Mortals" thus fulfilling South-winds prophecy which the writer has told as instructed by the Indian.

The Lotus beds mentioned are in Grass Lake about three miles up the Fox River from Mish-i-mi-nong and the description of the locality is true to nature. The following extracts from two letters will explain how the Legend was completed and engrossed.

Robert T. Pearce.

Leavenworth, Kansas.
March, 7th 1899.

My Dear Father.

I enclose with this my completed poem The Legend of Mish-i-mi-nong. If it gives you pleasure my object will be accomplished. It is crude and rough, I know, but the love which has prompted and followed the lines is my love for you.

Your Boy
Rob.

To Frank I. Pearce
Chicago, Ill.

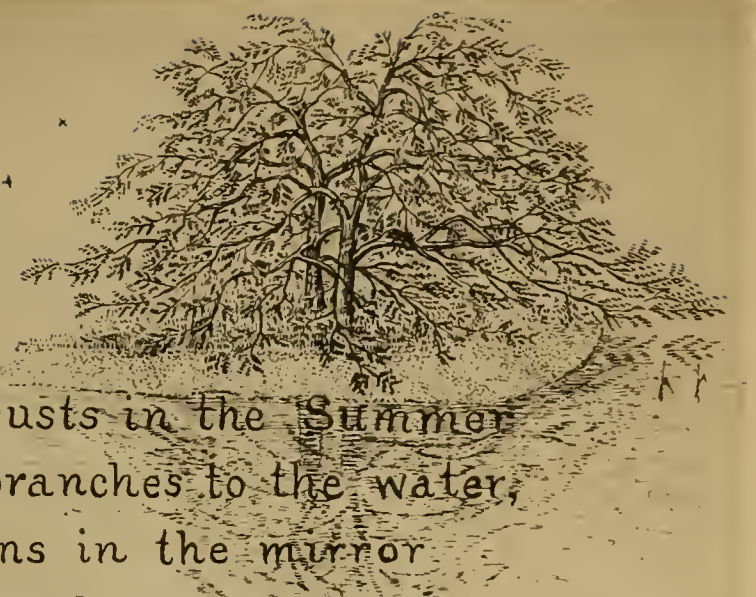
Chicago, July 7th 1899.

My Dear Boy

As a slight return for the thoughtfulness and love which prompted you to write "The Legend of Mish-i-mi-nong", I have endeavored to engross and illustrate it with my pen as a birth-day gift to you. May you find interwoven in each line and page the love of

Your affectionate
Father.

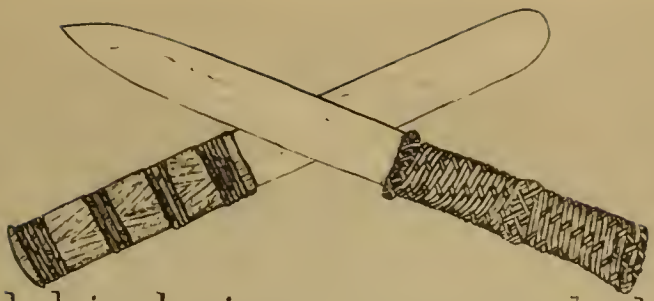
To Robert T Pearce
Leavenworth Kansas.



Where the Locusts in the Summer
Droop their branches to the water,
Cast reflections in the mirror
Kind Nature there has placed;
And the Poplars to the Northward
Hold the wind in sweet submission
Bending but not breaking,
Tempering all his playful antics
That the Locusts, looking calmly
In the faintly rippled water,
May receive the breath of North-wind,
As a maiden, fair and winsome
Gazing on her own reflection
In the calm and joy of Summer,
Receives the kiss of Lover
As he stops his onward journey,
Stops awhile to bide in sweetness
With his true love by the water:
So the North-wind fills with perfume
All the branches of the Locusts.

On a certain day in Summer
We were digging in the green sod
Neath the flickering shade of Locust,
Where the Poplars, tall and stately
Guard the treasures of the Island,
When we came upon an Indian
With his bow, and knives and charcoal,
Laid to rest before the North-wind
Ever kissed the bending Locust.
And we took his knives and charcoal
From the grave wherein we found them,
And we put them in the Cottage
We had builded by the water;
The bright and sparkling water
That surrounded Apple Island
As the cool refreshing moonbeams
Clothe the Earth in heat of Summer.

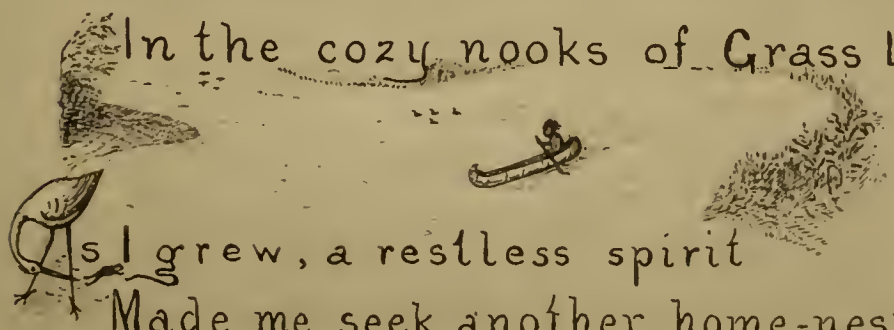
It was night. Pale moonbeams
Flickered through my window.
All was silent save the croaking
Of the bull frogs in the marsh:
And the low and deathly moaning
Of the North-wind in the Poplars
Sang as Spirits long departed.
A low harsh laugh greets my ears,
I cannot quell my rapid rising fears
For at my head a form of by-gone years
Sways with the sighing of the North-wind to and fro;
His face is old and dried and thin,
His hands are bony, and within
Those hands I see the cold steel play
Of the old knives we found to-day.
"What would'st thou with my knives" he said,
And came one step nearer to my bed.
"Man, would'st thou live, hark unto me
Thou must give to the World my history
And thou can'st live". "Tis well" I said.



He laid his knives upon my bed
Gazed long and earnest at my face,
"You'll do" he said, then took his place
At my side and in a voice of lurid power
Began:

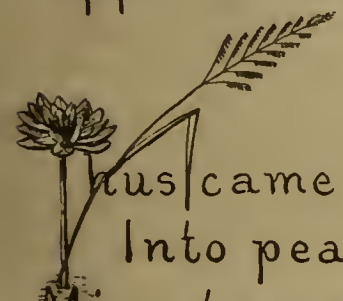
Mid the wild rice and the Lotus,
Where the wild duck and the white crane
Make their nest and live in comfort,
Where the waters flowing South-ward
With a current toward the Ocean,
Ever laughing, ever sparkling
Oe'r the Black Bass and the Pickerel,
Turn abruptly to the East-ward
Lose themselves mid Lotus blossoms;
Rocked to sleep in magic perfume
In the early days of August,
When the Sun was warm and happy
I was born among the Lotus.

Child was I of Flower and River
Sun and Wind and Lotus perfume,
Friend was I of birds and fishes
Wall-eyed Pike and Bass and Pickerel,
Sun-fish, Silver-bass and Dog-fish,
Mascalonge and all the others.
Rail and Loon, and saucy Black-bird,
Crane and Duck, Shypoke and Mud-hen
As they came to rest and quiet
In the happy days of childhood,
In the home of birds and fishes,
In the cozy nooks of Grass Lake.

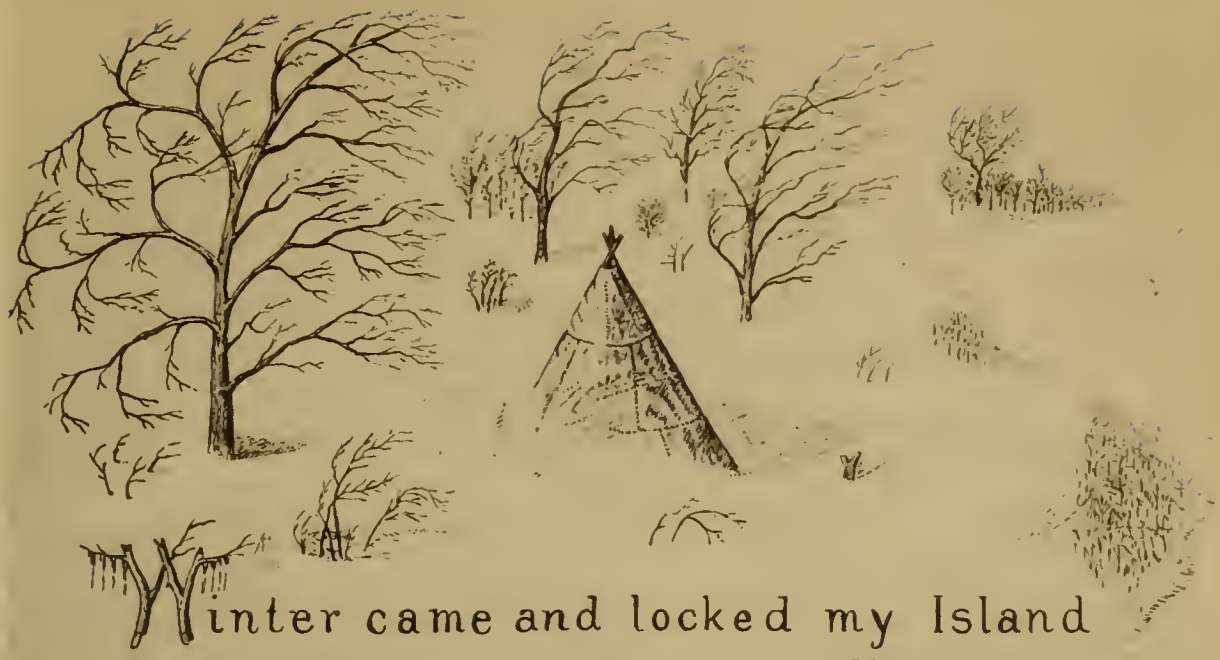


As I grew, a restless spirit
Made me seek another home-nest.
So I Journeyed down the River
To an Island in the Waters
Fair to look upon, and covered
With a growth of precious Apples.

When I came ashore and tasted
Of the sweetness of the Island,
And a Voice within me whispered
This is yours to love and cherish
Apple Island, Mish-i-mi-nong.

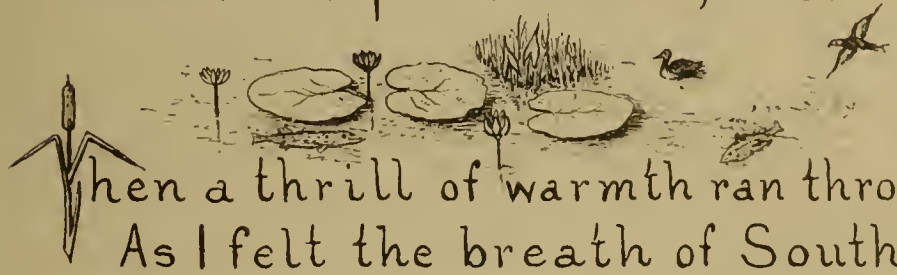


Thus came I into my kingdom
Into peace and rest and comfort,
Mine to guard and keep forever
With my friends the Birds and Fishes
All about to love and cherish;
And I drank the sparkling waters,
And I ate the luscious apples,
And I lived in peace and comfort
Through the bright warm days of Summer,
Free from cares of Earth and worry.



Winter came and locked my Island
In the arms of Frozen Water.
'Round my wigwam rushed the North-wind
With his moans and groans and hisses:
Then I built my roaring bon-fire
Bid defiance to the North-wind,
I a child of loving Summer;
'Till he cried in mortal anger
"I will blight thy perfect treasure,
I will come and kill thine Apple,
Make him shrink, and sour and dying
Take his sweetness, crook his branches;
I will take from Mish-i-mi-nong
All the love and joy forever,
I will drive you from your Eden,
I will pluck your Apple Blossom."

Then we fought; and 'round the bon-fire
Rushed the embers in our fighting.
Cursed I long and loud the North-wind
'Till at last he overcame me,
Blew my embers with his ice-breath,
Kissed my Apple ever shrinking
From his lips of death, destruction.



Then a thrill of warmth ran through me,
As I felt the breath of South-wind
Kiss my cheek as though the Summer
Had returned with Lotus perfume,
With my friends the Birds and Fishes.
As I faltered on the border
Of the Land of Happy Hunting,
South-wind spoke these words of wisdom.

Some day, One will come to linger
In the love of Mish-i-mi-nong,
Liberate thy soul from North-wind,
Take thy knives from off thy bosom.
Brave and strong and ever willing
Must his heart be to his fellows.
He will plant and trees will flourish
With his care and thy protection;
Flowers will blossom in the Spring-time,
He will love thy Birds and Fishes,
Love thy friends in happy Summer;
Ever beauteous be thy Island
With his love and thy protection.

Some warm day mid birds and blossoms
I will resurrect thine Apple,
It shall blossom with a sweetness
Never known before to Mortals,

Like the Lotus flowers in Summer
It shall come, a hope and promise,
As the rising Sun of morning,
As a song among the branches,
As the love of Mish-i-mi-nong.

Then all men shall see and wonder
And the Voice shall ever comfort;
Sorrow, grief, and care and worry,
Cannot harm within its perfume,
Those who dwell within the beauty,
In the love of Mish-i-mi-nong.

Like a dream my guest departed
Left his knives to prove my story;
As a shadow in the moonlight
He was gone, and it was morning.

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